

Iowa CONSERVATION Showcase

Friends Restore 112 Acres in Dickinson County

After a realtor's tip, two outdoor-minded friends purchased Dickinson County farmland with the intent of bringing most of it back to wetlands.

"Our realtor was the first to mention conservation programs to help with both the technical aspects and cost of restoration," said Dr. Bill Moreau, a chiropractor from Estherville. "In fact, the realtor marketed this property as a potential site for recreation activities, even though it wasn't being used for that at the time."

In 2002, Moreau and longtime friend Bill Beardsley of Estherville purchased 160 acres of mostly suspect cropland and pastureland in eastern Dickinson County, north of Superior. But after receiving assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through several conservation programs, they restored the land to wetlands, native grasses and wildflowers.

CRP Wetland and Buffer

Moreau and Beardsley purchased the property with recreational activities, such as pheasant hunting, in mind. They found the most economically- and environmentally-friendly way to restore the land was to work closely with the USDA and the Iowa DNR.

After the purchase, one of the first things Moreau and Beardsley did was visit the USDA Service Center in Spirit



Restored wetlands and native prairie and wildflowers have become a "home away from home" for Dr. Bill Moreau and his family.

Lake to explore their options. They began the restoration process by utilizing the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). CRP allowed Moreau and Beardsley to receive cost-share funds to restore the functions and values of the wetlands which had been farmed. It also put a buffer around the wetland to keep sediment, nutrients, and pollutants from impacting the wetland and wildlife habitat.

Permanent Easement Through WRP

In 2003 Moreau and Beardsley visited the USDA again to place a permanent easement on 112 acres of the property through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

The WRP is a voluntary program administered by the USDA's Natural

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Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that offers payment, based on the agricultural value, for restored wetlands that have previously been drained and converted to agricultural uses. The WRP pays up to 100

percent reimbursement for restoration costs and allows the landowners to retain ownership of the land.

Wetlands provide benefits for entire communities, including improved water quality, enhanced habitat for wildlife, reduced sediment delivery, reduced flooding and improved water supply.

Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

On the land adjacent to the 112-acre WRP permanent easement area, Moreau and Beardsley incorporated the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) through the Iowa DNR. The LIP provided cost-share funds to interseed local ecotype native grasses and wildflowers. The purpose of the program is to encourage landowners to improve existing habitat that host rare species, thereby assisting in species recovery and/or preempting the listing of declining species. LIP is designed for rare and often unnoticed plants, insects and reptiles.

Positive Results

Overall, Moreau said he and Beardsley are happy with the results of the restoration. "We love what has been done. This land means so much to our families. I don't intend on ever selling it," he said. "Our wives really get into identifying the native plants and wildflowers and my son loves to camp out here in the summer."



Landowner Bill Moreau took this picture of a Great Egret enjoying the wetlands on his property last summer.

To learn more about the WRP or other USDA conservation programs, visit your local USDA Service Center or go on-line to www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov.

Jason Johnson, Iowa NRCS
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Dickinson County Soil Conservation Technician Tim Moran (left) worked closely with Dr. Bill Moreau (right) in restoring more than 20 acres of wetlands through the Wetlands Reserve Program.

"There isn't a landowner in Iowa who can be happier than I am with the Wetlands Reserve Program," said Moreau. "The Hanbys (the previous owners) are good conservationists in their own right. But we're not farmers, so the WRP was the perfect program to help us restore this area the way we wanted."

As part of the WRP easement, NRCS assisted in restoring 23 acres of wetlands, completing a one-acre enhancement to an existing wetland, seeding 47 acres with local ecotype native grasses and wildflowers, and planning three WRP food plot areas. Most of the WRP work on Moreau and Beardsley's land was completed in the summer of 2005.

Helping People Help the Land

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